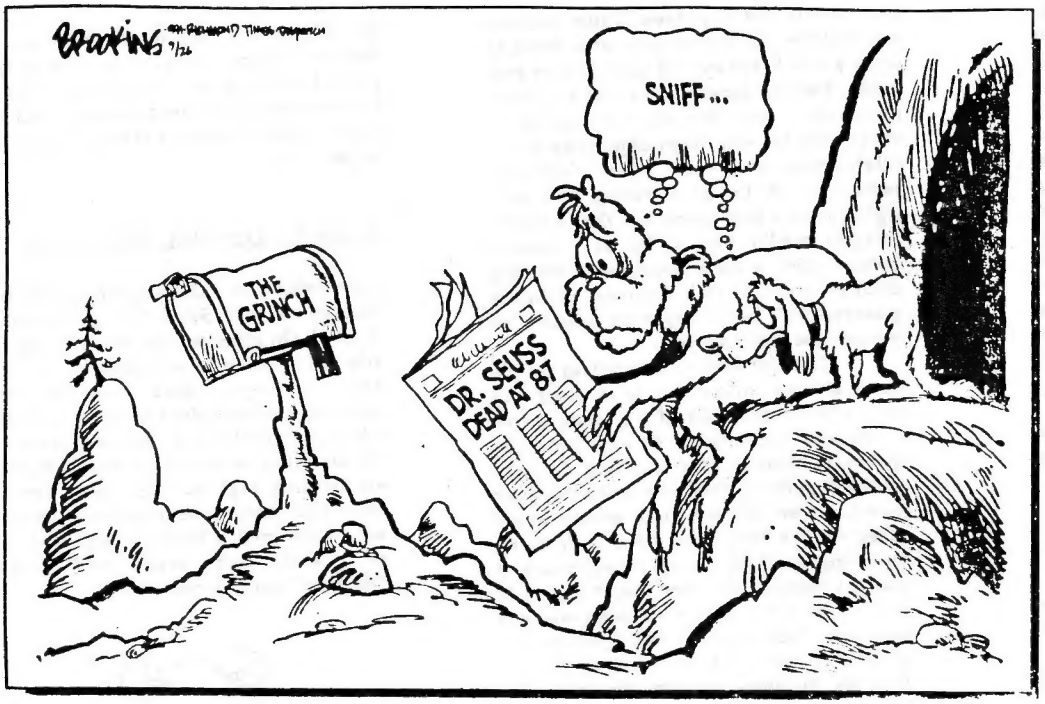

CLAY GEERDES' COMIX WAVE 115 © 1991. P. O. Box 7094, Berkeley, CA 94707. World Rights Reserved. Artwork and quoted material herein © the artists concerned. Used here for promotional purposes only. $9 for the next twelve issues. Set of back issues $ 40 postpaid.

IN MEMORY OF DR. SEUSS

I was out in Balboa Park in San Diego with David Miller back in 1983 and we saw the Cat in the Hat in the distance so we headed toward him. Turned out to be a museum showing of the art of Dr. Seuss, the definite highlight for me of that trip. We were in San Diego for the comic convention which was even then segueing into the giant trade show it has since become. We went to the exhibit and saw not only the early political cartoons of Theodore Seuss Geisel but many of his giant paintings as well.

That show was important to me and this newsletter, because I had been getting bored with it at that point and was thinking of retiring. I had said what I had to say about underground comix and they had drifted into the inevitable repetition that is the fate of comic strips and books that continue over too long a period, so it was either find a new direction or unplug my word processor and find something legitimate to do with my time. Seeing Dr. Seuss' show changed all of that. I reviewed it, wrote him a note, got a lovely reply, and started a long series of articles on children's literature that kept this letter alive.

Dr. Seuss died on Tuesday, September 24, 1991, at his home in La Jolla, California. He began his long career as a children's poet and cartoonist in 1937 with the publication of **IT ALL HAPPENED ON MULBERRY STREET**. His career is well documented in the libraries and I won't reiterate his accomplishments here. Suffice to say, I loved his imaginative art and have been fortunate enough to enjoy it all over again through the eyes of my best friend's grandson who is now a great fan of Dr. Hoober Bloob. C.G.

Babies are born with a sense of fairness, justice, morality, and a great capacity for kindness and forbearance, and it is sheer disappointment in the character and nature of parent and world that changes this eager infant into a murderous teenager. Some survive, of course; time heals a few wounds, wounds a few heels. The teenager gets older, encounters some nicer, more controlled, more kindly people than he or she ever found at home--most people behave worst in their own homes--and with any luck comes to understand, yes, there is an aspiration or so floating around out there, and, if he, she, hasn't seen too many horror movies, been too beaten up in body and mind, regains a little faith in a world at least potentially redeemable.

--Fay Weldon
DARCY'S UTOPIA,1990

You realize how time has passed when you have to tell someone what a Deadhead is. That happened to me the other day when there was a story in the local college paper about a Deadhead who woke up to find a strange head in her uncovered lap doing uninvited things to her bleep. The intruder ran out of the room and escaped but the Deadhead and her boy friend and some others found the abuser on Telegraph Avenue and beat him up. Police arrested him for possession and sexual assault and he's in the slam awaiting his fate.

Oh, a Deadhead is a head who follows the Dead, a head being someone who believes in taking LSD as a sacrament and the Dead being the Grateful Dead. If you're under forty, you probably don't even understand the patois of the sixties and would need a glossary to read the books about the Dead and the other rock bands that made San Francisco a major music and art center circa 1967. Many people formed tribes or communes in the sixties and began to live like nomads. After a short time, some rejoined mainstream culture, but a significant number continued to live in old painted up school busses, following the Grateful Dead on their concert tours and more or less turning their lives into art. These tribes are often lumped incorrectly with cults. I say this because they are more often secular than religious.

The Deadheads are not liked by straight people, now known as yuppies [always a derogatory term now though it began as a simple acronym for young urban professionals, the lower echelon avant-garde of the growing business clique], and in a polyglot community like Berkeley nary a day passes without some form of culture conflict. At this moment [October 16, 1991], squatters have a tent city on the lot that used to be covered by the Berkeley Inn and there are professional beggars working every corner near the UC campus that dominates the area. The owner of that corner has served the homeless an eviction notice and been flipped off and the city now has to decide just how they will clear the area without another major riot and major trashing of the neighborhood. When the university built a volley ball court on People's Park last January, the cost was nearly half a million dollars and numerous lawsuits. The riots in the area lasted three days and nights as Telegraph became a war zone.

During the Great Depression which lasted throughout the 1930s in this country, thousands of people left the midwest and came to California, many in response to ads circulated by orange growers in search of cheap labor. When they got here, they found police waiting for them. These people were forced to live outside the cities in shanty towns which were called Hoovervilles in honor of President Herbert Hoover. You can read about all of this in detail in John Steinbeck's **THE GRAPES OF WRATH** [or rent the video]. What is interesting is seeing a Hooverville right in the center of what has to be one of the most affluent communities in this part of the country. Let me tell you, with tuition and text and rents so high around here, there are very few poor students at Cal. I sit in the coffee shop drinking my tea and see the down and outs panhandling from students who double park their new sportscars to

stand in line for a quick frozen yogurt fix. The majority of the beggars are black while the new students are most likely to be Asian [34% of the current Freshman class]. The university raised tuition 40% recently, a clear message that Cal is out to become Harvard West. It is also out to assimilate the Berkeley community and stamp out the spirit of protest that was renewed in the early sixties via Civil Rights Activism, the Free Speech Movement, and the movement to stop the illegal war in Viet Nam. A major research arm of the military industrial complex, Cal is building far more laboratories on campus than classrooms. In the face of this continually growing, expanding, corporate-serving bureaucracy, it is not hard to understand how an area like People's Park becomes an ideal and a symbol.

BIG WAITPERSON IS WATCHING YOU!

You would think that the major prime time advertisers who invade more and more of our audio-visual space every second of every day would realize that their infiltration of everything with product images simply emphasizes to the public what greedy egocentric assholes they are. I hate seeing ads in the theaters and on rented videos and when they are built into the film I start to hate the product. I stopped buying various soft drinks when they were associated with singers and actors I liked as a protest and, you know what, I don't miss them at all! I appreciate products that leave me alone.

Speaking of products, we had a little to do here in Berkeley last week that really evolved into theater of the ridiculous. A guy was eating in a local diner and reading an article in **Playboy** and the waitperson [a woman] told him to put his magazine away because it offended her. Well, the guy had the normal reaction, he protested to the manager and got an apology, but after he thought about it he called up **Playboy** and got some free copies of their latest issue and passed them out the following Saturday for a read-in at the restaurant. Playboy, naturally, used the whole thing as a commercial and it relieved the boredom of a warless weekend. The waitperson argued that she had a right to work in a pornography free environment and the customer argued that he had a right to read anything he chose, this being America, the land of the First Amendment, blah and blah. When I heard about this, I had several reactions. I thought the guy was pushing it a little, because **Playboy**, however lame it has become as a fashion mag under Christie Hefner's rule, is still what I would consider a stroke book for young boys and not the sort of thing one reads over breakfast in a public diner; at the same time, I am one of those obstinate people who can't stand to have anyone tell me what to do and I know if a waitperson said anything about something I might be reading I would have told the person to fuck off. I stop going places where the employees rub me the wrong way.

What happened that day in front of the diner was absurd, but it was no more typical Berkeley than it was typical Madison or Chicago behavior. I get bugged with this *typical Berkeley* horseshit the local media people spout. As if they didn't live here in the Bay Area. Three factions met that day, the people who came down to score a free **Playboy** and save four or five bucks, the free speech folks; the anti-porn feminists, and the various media, a voyeuristic lot who feign objectivity while celebrating everyone else's deviant behavior. A lot of shouting and self-righteousness took place, but the cowardly straight media had to be very careful because some of the feminists were whirling dildoes around and wearing dicknose glasses--can't have anything phallic on the old tube now, can we?

The Our Bodies, Our Selves people have always struct me as a study in contradictory behavior. If a woman is free do do what she wants to do with her body, that is, to abort or have the child, to make all the significant decisions concerning her own life, then who are these women to tell other women they can't make their living modeling or selling sexual paraphenalia or doing whatever else they might choose to do? You're either free to do what you will with your body or you're not. What the anti porn gang really argues is that women are free to do only certain feministically acceptable things and when they violate neo-Goddess behavior, look out. What it boils down to is that all of us feel we have the right to tell other people how to live. I can't sit in a diner and read anything that might offend the waitperson, which means I am subject to the value system of the person pouring my tea. What if I had been reading COSMOPOLITAN? All those young models in their underwear! No offense. That's okay. That's a women's magazine, which is one in which the models are always associated with product, the real exploitation of beauty and youth--in **Playboy**, the models are only themselves.

Women at the read-in tore up copies of **Playboy** and made a big mess which, of course, they didn't bother to clean up, because being able to dictate other people's behavior goes hand in hand with being free to trash the street. People stood nose to nose calling one another various body parts and the evening news got some good footage and nothing was resolved. It never is. I've been watching scenes like this for thirty years and I know there are a lot of people with a theatrical bent who seek out public events for exhibitionistic purposes. They go to protest areas not because they really want to do anything about whatever social evil is being addressed, but because they get off on yelling at authority figures in public. I suspect more than a few of these people have a permanent mad on for their parents and public outrage is a lot cheaper than private therapy. Protest behavior has become cultic in our time and it is common to see the same people at radically different demonstrations and rallies. Today it's about the right to read a sex mag in a public diner, tomorrow it's about the right to eat a hot dog in a vegetarian restaurant--hey, a few months ago, it was about the right of a woman reporter to interview male football players in their locker room! I got a right. You got a right. Most familiar phrases on the street. Well, remember what Heller said in CATCH-22. *Catch-22 says you've got a right to do anything they can't keep you from doing.* Gotta go, folks. I'm late for the big volley ball match between the Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media and the White Aryan Brotherhood. It's a grudge match and let's hope it doesn't turn out to be all volley and no ball. C.G.

Some Far Out Shit, Man, Like...

Nice article on Paleo-scatologist Andrew Jones in **The Wall Street Journal** [September 9, 1991]. Dr. Jones resides in York, England, where he studies fossil's remains. Dr. Jones says the Lloyd's Bank Turd and other specimens reveal clues about the Vikings who occupied York a thousand years ago. He says they were not all war-mongering, ale-swilling rapists. Their fecal remains show that many were communal craftsmen who consumed a healthy, high-fiber diet of grains, fish, seeds and berries. "Hippies," quoth Jones.

We all want to be told stories and we listen to them in the same way we did when we were young. We imagine the real story inside the words, and to do this we substitute outselves for the person in the story, pretending that we can understand him because we understand ourselves. This is a deception. We exist for ourselves, perhaps, and at times we even have a glimmer of who we are, but in the end we can never be sure, and as our lives go on, we become more and more opaque to ourselves, more and more aware of our own incoherence. No one can cross the boundary into another--for the simple reason that no one can gain access to himself.

--Paul Auster
THE LOCKED ROOM, 1984.